



For Immediate Release

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***SENATE APPROVES BIPARTISAN/BICAMERAL APPROACH TO
RYAN WHITE CARE ACT REAUTHORIZATION,
ENDING WEEKS-LONG STALEMATE***

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, said the Senate has ended months of stalemate and delivered a victory for people living with HIV/AIDS with today's passage of the "Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resource Emergency Act" (RWCA), a bill Enzi said will, "save lives through treatment, and better target funding so that persons with HIV and AIDS have access to high quality care."

"The passage of this bill is a great victory for people struggling to live with HIV/AIDS but who have not been able to receive the care they deserve due to flawed funding formulas under the previous Ryan White CARE Act," Enzi said. "We must address the epidemic of today, not yesterday, and make sure the federal funds follow the person being treated – wherever they live. This bill will modernize the RWCA to ensure that federal dollars to treat HIV/AIDS finally go to the people who are most in need."

On Tuesday, Senate negotiators broke an impasse that had stalled the programs' reauthorization since early fall. The final compromise bill passed today modifies the "Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Modernization Act," H.R. 6143, which the House passed weeks ago, to provide a three-year reauthorization.

"We have spent months at the negotiating table trying to reach that agreement," Enzi said. "I am very pleased that we were finally able to reach that agreement, and am deeply grateful to everyone in the Senate who has made passage of this bill a reality."

Enzi said he looks forward to the House promptly enacting this life-saving bill before the 109th Congress adjourns.

The RWCA reauthorization bill approved today by unanimous consent in the Senate will save lives by increasing overall investment in Ryan White programs and revising flawed funding formulas, which currently favor states with urban areas and a

longer history of AIDS infections over states where the disease is now spreading most rampantly. It better targets funding so that infected persons have better access to high quality health care, improves accountability for health outcomes, and ensures more equitable treatment opportunities for all persons with HIV/AIDS.

“The Ryan White Care Act is one of our nation’s hallmark examples of caring and compassion, therefore we must ensure that services and supports are available to all those in need, no matter where they live,” Enzi said. “I commend the Committee’s Ranking Member, Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), the Committee’s Ranking Member, for his hard work on this vital legislation.

Enzi also praised the commitment of Congressman Joe Barton (R-TX) and Congressman John Dingell (D-MI) to reach an agreement on the RWCA reauthorization. “The passage of this bill shows that when we roll up our sleeves and work together across party lines, we can get things done.”

The Ryan White CARE Act was initiated in 1990 to provide treatment and care for individuals who are in the greatest need of assistance.

“While we have made significant progress in understanding and treating this disease, there is still much more to do to save lives through education and treatment and to ensure equitable treatment for all Americans infected with HIV/AIDS,” Enzi said.

Key provisions of the bill include:

- Maintaining funding levels of Title 1 and Title 2 at 95% of FY 2006 funding, and never allowing funding to fall below 95% of what states and cities received in 2006;
- Requesting that HHS provide a methodology to more accurately convey the need within an area or State so that funding decisions can be more equitable; and
- Allowing the law to sunset after the 3 years, reaffirming the need to readdress the overall structure of the law to better meet the needs of those living with HIV/AIDS.

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